Dealing Effectively With Problem Employees

NJSOM

What a Leader Is … and Isn't

"Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things."

– Peter Drucker

A leader is more than just someone who tells others what to do. A true leader must gain the trust and respect of those she leads in order for others to follow.

Here is a list of what most people think is characteristic of a leader; add your own thoughts about what makes a leader.

What a Leader Is …	What a Leader Isn't …
Engaging	Distant
Motivational	Dominant
Empowering	Dictator
Someone who communicates ideas well	Demanding
Professional	Unprofessional
Open to new ideas	Selfish

Take this leadership quiz to further define what a leader is and isn't.

The Leadership Quiz

	True	False
A leader fulfills the same role as a manager.	T	F
The leader will have the highest IQ.	T	F
The leader is generally out in front of the team.	T	F
The leader makes people feel important and motivated.	T	F
The leader takes credit for what the team has done.	T	F
The leader provides learning resources only if she thinks they will be of help.	T	F
The leader is an excellent communicator.	T	F
The leader provides followers a message of hope.	T	F
The leader focuses on the here and now.	T	F

Employees perform poorly for a variety of reasons, some of which are beyond their control.
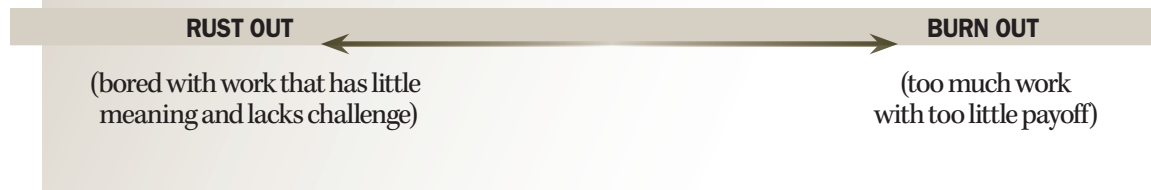
Common reasons for poor employee performance:

- The employee doesn't know what to do or what is expected
- There is a mismatch between the employee's skills and the job requirements
- The employee receives no feedback—positive or negative—and is unsure where he or she stands
- There is low morale in the workplace
- The employee lacks motivation
- The employee has family, health or drug abuse problems
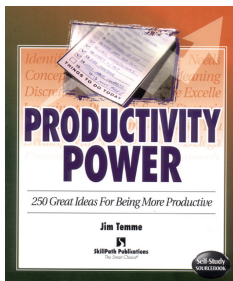
Source: Productivity Power

There are two kinds of activities: Job description and goal-related. While routine, job description activities are important, employees also need to be involved in high-payoff, goal-related activities—projects that yield meaningful results for the organization. Spending too much time on "other duties as assigned" will likely result in employees falling at either extreme on the following continuum:

RUST OUT ← → **BURN OUT**

(bored with work that has little meaning and lacks challenge)   (too much work with too little payoff)

Identifying the problem

Ask yourself if the problem is due to employees:

- Not knowing what they are supposed to do or how they should do it
- Thinking another task is more important
- Thinking they are doing the job
- Being punished for doing what they are supposed to do
- Experiencing obstacles they cannot control
- Having personal problems
- Believing your way will not work or that their way is better
- Lacking positive consequence for doing the task
- Being rewarded for not doing it
- Knowing there are no negative consequences for poor performance
- Experiencing unrealistic expectations on the part of management

How to Give Criticism and Negative Feedback Without Provoking Workers

Most managers do not like to give criticism or negative feedback, and no one likes to receive it.

To make this difficult and often painful process easier, follow these steps:

- Prepare adequately
- Always direct criticism toward the action—not the person
- Make sure feedback is given in a timely manner
- Keep documentation—"I noted that you were late eight times this month."
- Deliver feedback objectively and unemotionally
- Use "I" messages
- Watch for nonverbal clues to see how the employee is receiving the information
- Allow the employee to vent, and don't talk more than you listen
- Encourage employee input when seeking a solution
- Make it clear what changes you expect the employee to make and what the consequences will be if the changes are not made
- Compliment good behavior
- Set a time for follow-up

Six Tips for Overcoming the Most Common Supervisor-Employee Communication Barriers

You are sure you told your employee how you wanted him to handle that assignment, but apparently he didn't listen. Are you sure? Is it possible that you didn't clearly communicate what you wanted? Look at these six tips for overcoming supervisor-employee communication barriers.

1. Watch for inadequate listening—on both your parts
2. Appeal to the interest of the receiver
3. Confront preconceived ideas
4. Beware of differences in meaning
5. Use bias-free language
6. Repeat messages and avoid communication overload

A Four-step Approach to Delivering Feedback
That's Specific, Non-accusatory and Gets Results

FIRR is a four-step approach to delivering feedback that's specific, non-accusatory and will get you the results you want.

Use FIRR when delivering feedback:

F **Facts:**

I **Impact:**

R **Respect:**

R **Request:**

Think of the last time you had to give negative feedback. Using the FIRR technique, think about how you could have given more effective feedback.

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Multiple Responsibilities/ Time Management

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Which Personality Type Are You?
Take Our Self-evaluation Test

Once you understand what your personality type is, you can start to understand why you get along or don't get along with other personality types. We've talked about how to control your emotions. Next, we'll take a look at how you can empower yourself by knowing and understanding your personality type.

Self-style analysis

This is an informal quiz, designed to determine how you interact with others in everyday situations. Read through the statements and check the answer from each set that best describes you.
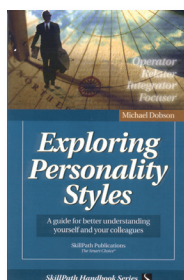
1. Easy to get to know personally in business or unfamiliar social environments — R

   More difficult to get to know personally in business or unfamiliar social environments — D

2. Focuses conversations on issues and tasks at hand; stays on subject — D

   Conversation reflects personal life experiences; may stray from "business at hand" — R

3. Infrequent contributor to group conversations — A

   Frequent contributor to group conversations — I

4. Tends to adhere to the letter of the law — A

   Tends to interpret the spirit of the law — I

5. Makes most decisions based on his/her goals, facts or evidence — D

   Makes most decisions based on his/her feelings, experience or relationships — R

6. Infrequent use of gestures and voice intonation to emphasize points — A

   Frequently uses gestures and voice intonations to emphasize points — I

7. More likely to make emphatic statements like "This is so!" and "I feel … " — I

   More likely to make qualified statements like "According to my sources … " — A

8. Greater natural tendency toward animated facial expressions or observable body responses during speaking and listening — R

   More limited facial expressions or observable body responses during speaking and listening — D

9. Tends to keep important personal feelings private; tends to share only when necessary — D

   Tends to be more willing to show or share personal feelings more freely — R

10. More likely to introduce self to others at social gatherings	I
More likely to wait for others to introduce themselves at social gatherings	A
11. Flexible about how his/her time is used by others	R
Disciplined about how his/her time is used by others	D
12. Goes with his/her own agenda	D
Goes with the flow	R
13. More naturally assertive behavior	I
More naturally reserved behavior	A
14. Tends to express his/her own views more readily	I
Tends to reserve the expression of his/her own opinions	A
15. Tends to naturally decide more quickly or spontaneously	I
Tends to naturally decide more slowly or deliberately	A
16. Prefers to work independently or dictate the relationship conditions	D
Prefers to work with others or be included in relationships	R
17. Naturally approaches risk or change more slowly or cautiously	A
Naturally approaches risk or change more quickly or spontaneously	I

Total number checked:

R_____ D_____ I_____ A_____

The one with the most checked is the personality style that best describes you.

It's important to remember not to over-interpret your score—it could vary by a few points depending on the time and circumstances under which you answered the questions. Similarly when you're using the information to help you work with others, don't assume because you've learned some things about another person that you've gleaned everything there is to know.

Description of Personality Types

RELATER: WHO

Relaters are "people persons" and are very interested in "who's *who*" in their business circles. Relaters want to have influence at work. They're very animated people and like to participate in group activities. They are observant, helpful and flexible individuals. They're people-oriented and like building relationships with co-workers.

ANALYZER: WHY

Analyzers need time to assess a situation. They want to understand *why* things work a certain way. They are listeners who can help integrate ideas and proficiently problem solve. They are creative and self-reliant and like to work independently.

INNOVATOR: HOW

Innovators are extremely creative workers. They are very good at inspiring others to follow through on ideas. They are analytical thinkers who like to channel their ideas through people and work well in groups. They enjoy a challenge and are relentless learners. Innovators are interested in *how* they can implement their ideas and are not afraid of risks.

DRIVER: WHAT

Drivers like to have authority because they have strong leadership skills. These are fast-paced people with clear goals. Their focus is on productivity and outcomes. These people are interested and driven by the concept of *what* needs to get done and what to do to get it done.

Understanding the Powerful Role "Personality" Plays in the Workplace

Personality is not like behavior; it can't be easily changed. Therefore, understanding how people's personalities may influence how they see the world will help you effectively communicate your thoughts and ideas to people of particular personality types.

The power of personality in the workplace

- Managing diverse personalities is difficult:
  - Some personalities don't mix well when things need to be done a certain way
  - Personality clashes can cause unnecessary conflict, lower morale, impede cooperation and reduce productivity from a team that was performing well

How to Identify and Minimize the Personality Traits That Make You Vulnerable to Stress

We sometimes compound our stressors because our personality type drives us into certain outlooks. Take a moment to think about your personality type and how you can reduce the stress you produce in others, thereby reducing your own stress.
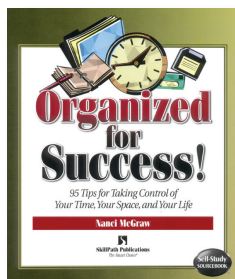
How to identify	How to minimize
Driver Results driven, fast-paced, leader, aggressive, not inclined to praise or listen, blunt and dictatorial	**Driver** Work on teamwork, learn to slow down, listen, work on assertiveness instead of aggressiveness, develop understanding and patience
Relater Wants to be liked, needs consensus of the group, works well with those who they relate to, slower-paced and overly emotional	**Relater** Realize that sometimes you have to take the upper hand, you can't please or relate to everyone; need to pick up the pace when time is short and learn to keep emotions in check
Innovator Focuses on long-range plans, likes to brainstorm, can be chaotic, unrealistic, insensitive and may have trouble going the distance	**Innovator** Realize the need for short-range plans, learn patience, become more realistic, become more sensitive to others, learn control and how to follow through
Analyzer Methodical and thorough, detail-oriented, likes to follow rules, likes clear-cut assignments, doing the right thing, can be unemotional and distrustful	**Analyzer** Learn to accept variance, look at the bigger picture, sense where focusing on details can be most productive, work on relationships and put faith in others

The 10 "Golden Rules" of Time Management

These 10 Golden Rules can help you learn how to best manage your time. In doing so, you will be able to free up precious time to spend on the truly important tasks and projects on your plate. Use these rules and watch your productivity grow.

1. Know how you currently spend your time. In order to manage your time, you must first know how you spend it. You may wish to keep a log for a week to see the ways you use your time.

2. Identify your "prime time." Some people work better first thing in the morning while others tend to "wake up" later in the day. Identify your best time and use it to carry out your most important or difficult tasks.

3. Do tomorrow's planning tonight. This allows you to start off working first thing the next morning without having to decide what to do first.

4. Ask yourself "Why am I doing what I'm doing right now?" While this may seem like a silly question, it is, in fact, a valid one. It's easy to get sidetracked on less vital issues. Asking yourself this question can help you refocus your attention where it is most beneficial.

5. Handle each piece of paper once. This can be a difficult habit to get into, but it can save you a lot of time.

6. Plan your work, but work your plan. Don't spend your time making a plan unless you actually intend to put it to use.

7. Delegate whenever possible. Don't fall into the trap of feeling you have to do everything since no one else can do it as well as you do. Not only is this not true, you're causing yourself additional stress by trying to do it all.

8. Delegate wisely. It's poor planning—and unfair to your employees—to delegate tasks to them that they don't have the skills, time, authority or resources to do.

9. Identify your high-payoff items. Spend most of your time and energy on those items with the biggest return.

10. Concentrate on results, not on being busy. While you may work hard and go home exhausted after a long day at work, at the end of the day, consider what you actually *accomplished*.

An Eye-opening Test to See Just How Out of Control Your Workday Really Is

This test will help you understand how out of control your workday really is. It will help you define those areas where you need to make changes in order to increase your productivity.

You must first analyze your current situation to pinpoint the areas of your life where you're wasting or inefficiently using your time, energy and resources.

How out of control is your workday?

	Always	Usually	Often	Sometimes
I am swamped with paperwork.	A	B	C	D
I let magazines pile up without reading them.	A	B	C	D
I clip articles but don't get around to reading them.	A	B	C	D
My desk is covered with piles of papers, files and books.	A	B	C	D
My computer files aren't backed up.	A	B	C	D
My computer files are disorganized.	A	B	C	D
My audio and videotapes are in a hodgepodge.	A	B	C	D
My work tools are in disarray.	A	B	C	D
More paper comes into my office than goes out.	A	B	C	D
I find it difficult to throw things away.	A	B	C	D
I'm often late, and I sometimes miss appointments.	A	B	C	D
I misplace small pieces of paper and sticky notes.	A	B	C	D
People put items on my chair or computer so I'll be sure to see them.	A	B	C	D
My in box is always full.	A	B	C	D
I work at another place because my desk is so messy.	A	B	C	D
I don't use my computer to get organized or to automate routine jobs.	A	B	C	D
I struggle with conflicting deadlines and demands on my time.	A	B	C	D
I use filing cabinets to hide desk items when visitors come.	A	B	C	D
I feel discouraged or frustrated by my work environment.	A	B	C	D
I don't know which are my real priorities.	A	B	C	D
I start one task and then get distracted and move to another one.	A	B	C	D
People leave messages for me here and there.	A	B	C	D
People can't find items that I file or put away.	A	B	C	D

Tally the number of times you responded with each letter. Now take a look at which letter(s) you chose most often. The bottom line is this:

Cs and Ds aren't real problems—no one's perfect, so it's a fact of life that you'll occasionally be unprepared or disorganized. As and Bs are your real problem areas. A preponderance of As and Bs will tell you much about the energy and commitment you'll need for getting organized and taking control, and how far you must travel to reach "there" from "here."

How to Eliminate the *Big Three* Productivity Killers: Procrastination, Poor Planning and Personal Disorganization

You're on the way to work and mentally planning your day. You're feeling good because today, no matter what, you will finish that project that has been hanging over your head, tackle those e-mails that you have yet to answer, catch up on your reports and finish the budget that was due yesterday. On your way home that evening, you realize, with a heavy heart, that you only succeeded in answering your e-mails.

If you find you have more days like this than you would like, chances are you're guilty of the big three productivity killers:

1. ***Poor planning:*** Many people simply don't plan ahead. But this is a vital step in using your time wisely. It's also important that your planning be realistic! Don't set yourself up for failure by making unreasonable expectations of yourself.

2. ***Personal disorganization:*** Disorganization is a huge time waster. In addition, disorganization adds greatly to your stress level, which leads to further disorganization, which leads to more stress, etc.

3. ***Procrastination:*** Procrastinating is so easy to do and so hard to avoid, especially when the task is something you really don't want to do. When you feel yourself procrastinating, focus on how good it will feel when the task is done and off your plate.

Eight Foolproof Principles for
Effectively Managing Competing
Priorities Without Sacrificing Quality

It is the lucky manager who doesn't have an overload of projects and numerous other things to do. So how do you decide which tasks to do first and which to hold off on? Use the four quadrants to help you set your priorities—without sacrificing quality.

Identifying and setting priorities
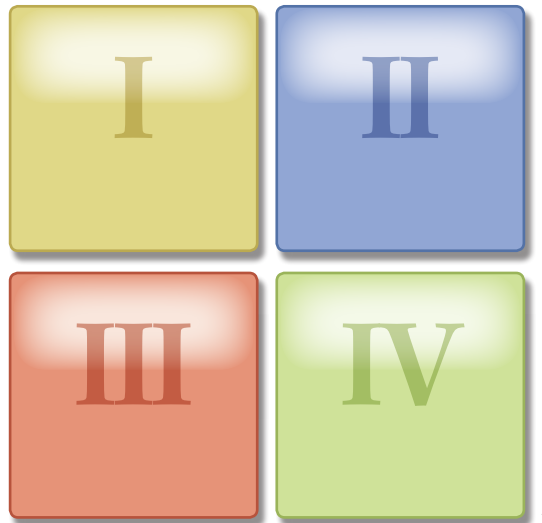
1. Determine what is important and urgent (quadrant 1)

2. Determine what is important but not urgent (quadrant 2)

3. Determine what is not important but is urgent (quadrant 3)

4. Determine what is not important and not urgent (quadrant 4)

5. Make a prioritized action list

6. Decide what is your best time of day

7. Delegate quadrant three and four tasks

8. Reward yourself

* Adapted from *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*—Stephen Covey

List up to 10 things you did at work yesterday.

1.   6.

2.   7.

3.   8.

4.   9.

5.   10.

Now decide where they should go in the four quadrants.

I	II
III	IV *

*Adapted from *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*—Stephen Covey

Hire Your E-mail Program as Your New "Electronic Assistant"

Almost everyone has a powerful but under-utilized assistant right at their fingertips. Your e-mail program is capable of carrying out many activities an assistant would do and can be customized to your particular needs. If you aren't familiar with the variety of features your e-mail program provides, take time to read the on-line help section. It will save you time in the long-run.

Most e-mail programs allow you to:

- *Set up meetings:* This is much quicker than making phone calls

- *Schedule reminders:* This can be a vital help in your busy day, reminding you of meetings, tasks, activities, phone calls, etc. Set your e-mail program's calendar to "remind you" at a specific time.

- *Keep track of tasks:* The tasks feature can help you keep track of your tasks and their progress

- *Use folders:* Use folders to organize your e-mail messages and locate them quickly

- *Create filters:* A filter is an easy way to view only those items or files stored in folders that meet conditions you specify

- *Apply rules:* Use rules to tell your program what to do with e-mail when it arrives, e.g., moving all mail from John into his folder

- *Color code your calendar:* This helps you tell at a glance what type of activities you have scheduled

- *Keep copies of sent e-mail:* Always a good idea since you may need to refer back to an e-mail you sent

- *Use an automatic signature:* This feature saves you time by automatically typing your name, title, company, phone number, etc. on each e-mail you send. You can set up more than one signature.

- *Set recurring appointments:* Use this feature to set recurring appointments without having to add the appointment to each date

- *View others' schedules:* This can help you schedule meetings by seeing when others are available

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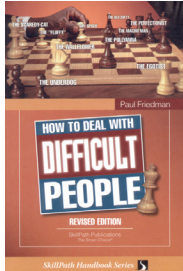
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Effectively Managing On-site and Off-site

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Using Praise Effectively: Why How You Praise Is as Important as the Praise Itself

People respond better to praise than to criticism. They are willing to work harder for someone who recognizes and appreciates what they do well than for someone who picks at whatever they do.

Think of someone you consider "difficult." In this exercise, list three very specific things that person did last week that you liked. Some examples might be:

- "Told me honestly what he thought."
- "Apologized when he made a mistake."
- "Left me alone to do the job my own way."

1.

2.

3.

Look back at your list. Did you let that person know you noticed and liked each one? If you tell other people what pleases you about their behavior, they will enjoy their work more, enjoy being around you and feel more motivated to do things for you. Simply put, try to catch people doing something right.

Many managers fail to praise because they believe that employees are "just doing their job." While this is true, these managers are failing to take into consideration the human aspect of supervising.

When praising:

- Praise with purpose: Remember that the reason you praise is to improve employee morale and increase productivity
- Target your praise: Telling an employee, "Your report was professionally written" instead of "You did a good job on that report" is effective praise.
- Praise authentically: Your praise must be sincere, honest and well-intentioned
- Praise with the right frequency: If you praise too often, the praise becomes meaningless
- Praise as close to the action as possible
- Praise in public: But be sure public praise will not embarrass the employee
- Reprimand in private: Always reprimand in private

"You can't run from trouble, there ain't no place that far."

—Splash Mountain

When things go wrong, it is usually due to lack of trust, conflict that has not been acknowledged or resolved or poor communication.

Warning signs that things are not as they should be:

■ Employees are confused about direction and/or focus

■ Employees are unusually hesitant to speak up

■ Information is not being shared completely or in a timely manner

■ Conflict increases and/or employees become secretive

■ Energy levels are low

■ Errors increase

What you should do:

■ Watch for subtleties and nuances

■ Be scrupulously fair

■ Deal with nonperformance

■ Catch conflict early

■ Carry out scheduled one-on-one coaching sessions

■ Increase face-to-face time

Giving Feedback From Afar—
a New Twist on a Powerful Motivating Tool

Establishing objectives for your employees is an important step to success. However, if you don't let your employees know if they are adequately meeting these goals, they cannot change behavior or improve. This is especially true of off-site employees since they are not privy to the informal performance feedback on-site employees often receive.

For effective, meaningful and successful feedback:

1. Schedule regular performance reviews, and be sure your feedback is connected to the employees' established objectives

2. Explain the process that you will use to review their performances

3. Be candid but instructive

4. Focus your feedback on objectives—not on character traits or personalities

5. Make it a two-way street. Ask for feedback about you from your employees.

Are You Hiding Behind E-mail When
You Should Be Picking Up the Phone?

Be sure that you are not hiding behind e-mail or voice mail. Sometimes it is easier to dash off a quick e-mail or leave a voice mail over lunch time. But the price you pay for this convenience is the loss of the human touch, which is vital to developing trust, remaining visible and being an effective off-site manager.

Effective e-mails

- E-mail tone

    The right words

    — Personal pronouns

    — Active voice

    — Professional structure

    The right way

    — Forwarding

    — Replying

    — Replying to all

A Hard—but Important—Realization About How Meetings With Off-site Teams Should Be Conducted

Meetings can be managed remotely through teleconferencing and videoconferencing if:

- Distractions are kept to a minimum

- Participants are well prepared and focused

- Communication is well thought out and concise

- The teleconference or videoconference is seen as a priority

However, face-to-face meetings must also be used to encourage relationship building and to handle more-sensitive issues.

Top Reasons Why Off-site Employees Feel Left Out—and What to Do About Them

While many managers are concerned about managing off-site employees well, many employees who work off-site are also concerned. They fear they will be:

- Invisible

- Forgotten

- Passed over for promotions or prime assignments

- Missing out on integral information

Reasons can include:

1. Team culture lacking

2. Lack of support

3. Lack of trust

4. No accountability

5. Lack of face-to-face time

6. Failure to communicate adequately and frequently

7. Lack of social interaction

8. Lack of adequate feedback

The Top 10 Ways to Harness Inborn Worker Motivation to Accomplish Organizational Goals and Produce Quality Work

"Everything that enlarges the sphere of human powers, that shows man he can do what he thought he could do, is valuable."

– Samuel Johnson

Motivation is widely acclaimed as a key to an empowered, self-directed and productive work environment. As a manager, you can motivate employees through your own example as well as by implementing specific techniques that foster openness, a willing attitude, dedication and mutual understanding among employees and between employees and management.

Harness inborn worker motivation using these 10 techniques:

1. Give ongoing feedback

2. Provide opportunities for improvement and growth

3. Bestow authority

4. Offer flexible schedules

5. Stress personal accountability

6. Provide an open, trusting and supportive environment

7. Involve workers in decisions

8. Ask workers what motivates them

9. Celebrate employee and company success

10. Offer interesting work assignments

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